

Editors' Note

Marilyn Francus, West Virginia University, and Hilary Havens, University of Tennessee

Recommended Citation

Francus, Marilyn, and Hilary Havens. "Editors' Note." *The Burney Journal*, vol. 17, 2020, pp. 6-7. <https://www.mcgill.ca/burneycentre/burney-society/burney-journal/vol17/1>.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

Editors' Note

MARILYN FRANCUS and HILARY HAVENS

Frances Burney's novels take center stage in this volume of *The Burney Journal*, as questions of gendered expectations, intellect, and performance come to the forefront in this set of articles.

The first two articles explore Burney's critique of normative female expectations within her final novel *The Wanderer*. In "Frances Burney's Queer Gothic: *The Wanderer* as Critique of Reproductive Futurity," Nowell Marshall argues that Burney finds fault with the heteronormative narratives of marriage and reproduction. Not only does Juliet's narrative present sapphic alliances as highly desirable, but her marriage plot resonates with gothic horror—and both work to undermine the traditional female trajectory of courtship leading to marriage and parenthood. As Marshall demonstrates, *The Wanderer* is populated with characters in addition to Juliet who defy the expectations of reproductive futurity: the marriage-resistant bachelors, like Mr. Ireton and Sir Jasper Harrington, and Wollstonecraftian radicals, like Elinor Joddrell. In so doing, Marshall makes a compelling case for *The Wanderer* as Burney's queer gothic novel.

Kristin M. Distel associates gender expectations and performance with national identity, class, and shame in "Never, Most Certainly Never, Can I Perform in Public": Juliet and the Shame of Visibility in Burney's *The Wanderer*." For Distel, Juliet's inability to perform as an Englishwoman works against her from the beginning of the novel. As Distel shows, the expectations of gender clash with those of class and national identity: an Englishwoman of the upper class would not be expected to work, but Juliet needs to work to survive; Juliet is manipulated to perform in public in ways that an Englishwoman of her status would not. Juliet's hybrid national and class status confuses people, and her modest, virtuous behavior—which complies with gender expectations—confounds them. While Elinor Joddrell's behavior contrasts with Juliet's, ultimately she is subject to the same social criteria; at the end of the novel, as Elinor fails to perform her national and gender identities properly, she is punished with shame and exile.

The two articles in the latter half of this volume interpret Burney's novels alongside the works of two of her female literary predecessors. Alicia A. McCartney contextualizes female friendship in Burney's *Camilla* using Hester Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773). After highlighting the dismissive views of female friendship in works like James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1766) and John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774), McCartney describes Chapone's friendship "categories" and Burney's application of them as a corrective. Using Mrs. Arlbery as an example of Chapone's "older woman" friend and Mrs. Berlington as an example of the "adulterous" friend type, McCartney navigates between Burney's *Camilla* and her own female friendships—including those with Mary Delany, Hester Thrale Piozzi, Madame de Staël, and

Chapone herself—to show how she complicates Chapone's friendship categories.

Cleo O'Callaghan Yeoman interprets Burney's first novel alongside Charlotte Lennox's most famous novel in "Intellects in Isolation: A Reading of Retirement in *Evelina* and *The Female Quixote*." Yeoman traces the intellectual development of both Burney's *Evelina* and Lennox's *Arabella*, who are youthful heroines raised in retirement and introduced to London life in their respective novels. Their notable and mutual "quickness" leads Yeoman to conclude that their "upbringing[s] in rural isolation" reveal not only that their intellectual abilities are "innate" but also that they overturn the stereotypical opposition of city and country during the eighteenth century: while enlightenment was more frequently associated with the metropolis, McCartney argues that *Evelina* and *Arabella*'s respective introductions into society demonstrate that their pastoral upbringings serve as the source of, rather than a hindrance to, their native intelligence. After roughly a year of pandemic-induced isolation, Yeoman's articulation of the intellectual possibilities afforded by rural retreat is a concluding note of optimism for this volume and the coming year.